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Reagan talks tough on leaks

WASHINGTON [AP]—President Reagan, weighing strategies to curb leaks of classified and sensitive information, said Tuesday his administration is bound by law to prosecute people who make material public that could undermine national security.

The President conferred for an hour with a Cabinet-level group Monday, discussing the problem of leaks and what to do about them.

"It was a discussion. It was not a decision-making meeting," said Edward Djerejian, a White House deputy press secretary. "There will be more discussions and meetings and recommendations made to the President."

Reagan, posing for pictures Tuesday before a meeting with Republican congressional leaders, was asked whether he agreed with CIA chief William Casey that members of the news media should be prosecuted for leaks.

"It isn't a case of what we may think about it," he replied.

"There is a law that was passed—I believe it was in 1954—that's very specific and not just about the media. It's about anyone who makes public information which could be dangerous to our national security. And I would think that all of us are bound by that law."

He apparently was referring to a 1950 law against "publishing any classified information concerning the communications intelligence activities of the United States."

He did not elaborate on his remarks, and Djerejian and another White House spokesman, Peter Roussel, refused to discuss the substance of Monday's meeting.

However, NBC Nightly News reported Monday night that Reagan and his advisers agreed that there would be no blanket use of lie detectors by the federal government, and that each agency would decide

for itself whether they would be used.

The Washington Post, in Tuesday's editions, said the "prevailing view" of the group was that officials who leaked secrets should be fired or punished.

But it said the group did not reach any agreement on whether stringent new procedures are needed.